

REMARKS

This is a full and timely response to the Examiner's outstanding Office Action mailed Dec. 5, 2001. Reconsideration of the presently pending amended claims is respectfully requested.

Upon entry of the amendments in this response, claims 1-21 remain pending in the present application. In response to the restriction requirement, claims 1-11 are elected without traverse, and claims 12-21 are withdrawn from consideration. Claims 1, 2, 8, 9, and 10 are amended. These amendments are specifically described hereinafter. It is believed that the foregoing amendments add no new matter to the present application.

The amendments in the specification are made merely to correct minor grammatical informalities and to maintain consistent terminology. For instance, on p. 7, the term "sub-panel slots" has been changed to "cut-out 37 areas" to maintain consistency of the term "cut-out" used throughout the specification. The claims have been amended to correct grammatical informalities, to conform to the terminology used throughout the specification, and to further limit the present invention in order to emphasize the differences between the present invention and the prior art.

Response To Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. 102

Claims 1-9 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by *Sanchez et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 6,086,415). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection on the grounds that the reference does not teach all of the elements of claim 1, as amended.

With respect to amended claim 1 as it is now presented in the present application, the reference to *Sanchez et al.* does not include the limitation of "*a plurality of sub-panels*". Instead, *Sanchez et al.* disclose a single panel 22, as opposed to a plurality of sub-panels, connected to the main panel 24. Since the single panel 22 of *Sanchez et al.* extends along the entire length of the main panel 24, it would be impossible for *Sanchez et al.*

al. to accommodate additional sub-panels on the main panel. *Sanchez et al.* does not teach or even suggest the use of "*a plurality of sub-panels*" as is now claimed in claim 1. Furthermore, *Sanchez et al.* does not disclose the limitation that "*each sub-panel spans across a respective cut-out*" as in claim 1. Claim 1 has been amended to further distinguish the present invention over the prior art by including this limitation, as is described in the specification and drawings with respect to the receptacles 35 (Fig. 2) and respective attaching means 59, 69, 79, 89, 99, 109, and 119 of the sub-panels shown in Figs. 3-9. Since the one panel 22 of *Sanchez et al.* spans across all of the cut-outs of the main panel 24, it would be impossible for *Sanchez et al.* to accommodate additional sub-panels, wherein "*each sub-panel spans across a respective cut-out*." Therefore, Applicants believe that claim 1, as amended, is not anticipated by *Sanchez et al.* and is allowable over the prior art of record.

Applicants deem claims 2-9 to be allowable for at least the reasons stated above with respect to claim 1, from which these claims depend either directly or indirectly. Furthermore, claims 2-9 contain limitations which further distinguish the present application from the prior art. For instance, claims 3 and 4 comprise a bottom support and a top support, respectively, each of which provides "*support for the main panel on the rack*." *Sanchez et al.* does not describe a top or bottom support for providing support for the main panel.

Furthermore, *Sanchez et al.* fails to disclose a means for removably securing that further comprises a "*threaded structure*" as claimed in dependent claim 7, since *Sanchez et al.* instead indicates that the engagement members 38 and 40 of the panel 22 is engaged with the engagement flanges of main panel 24. There is no indication in the reference to

the securing means having a "*threaded structure*." Applicants respectfully requests that the 35 U.S.C. 102(e) rejection be withdrawn.

With the arrangement of the embodiment shown in Fig. 2 of the present application, it is possible to attach up to eight sub-panels at a time to the main panel 31. With this arrangement, it is possible to have different types of connectors passing through the cut-outs, thereby saving space on the face of the rack for other equipment.

Response To Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. 103

Claims 10-11 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Sanchez et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 6,086,415). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection on the grounds that *Sanchez et al.* does not teach or suggest claims 10 and 11 as amended. Furthermore, claims 10 and 11 are believed to be allowable over the prior art of record for at least the reasons mentioned above with respect to claim 1, from which claims 10 and 11 depend.

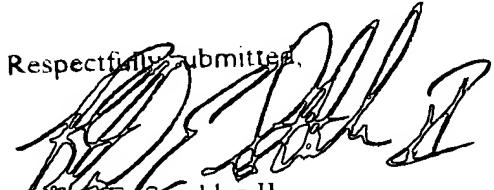
Regarding claims 10 and 11, *Sanchez et al.* does not teach or suggest each sub-panels having "*a label marking area*." In fact, *Sanchez et al.* is silent as to the plurality of sub-panels, as mentioned above. There is no teaching in the reference to *Sanchez et al.* that would suggest that the reference could be altered in any way to accommodate a plurality of sub-panels. Thus, *Sanchez et al.* fails to teach or suggest not only a plurality of sub-panels, but also each sub-panel (or any panel, for that matter) having "*a label marking area*." It would not reasonably follow that *Sanchez et al.* would benefit from such a label marking area since the panel 22 is not even visible through the main panel 24. Furthermore, *Sanchez et al.* would have no need for a label marking area since *Sanchez et al.* does not teach each respective sub-panel supporting a "*respective predetermined connector*." Without sub-panels supporting respective connectors, *Sanchez et al.* would have no need for a "*label marking area to identify the respective predetermined connectors*" as is claimed in amended claim 10.

Applicants believe that neither *Sanchez et al.* nor the other prior art references made of record affect the patentability of the presently pending claims. For this reason, Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. 103(a) rejection. It is believed that the claims as amended are now in condition for allowance and it is requested that Examiner kindly pass this application to issuance.

CONCLUSION

In light of the foregoing amendments and for at least the reasons set forth above, Applicant respectfully submits that all rejections have been traversed, and that the now pending elected claims 1-11 are in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the present application and all pending claims are hereby courteously requested. If, in the opinion of the Examiner, a telephonic conference would expedite the examination of this matter, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney at (770) 933-9500.

Respectfully submitted,



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ANNOTATED VERSION OF MODIFIED SPECIFICATION TO SHOW  
CHANGES MADE

The following is a marked up version of the amended specification:

Please replace the paragraph starting on p. 2, line 2 with the following substitute paragraph:

The present invention provides an apparatus and method for providing [an] a modular system interface. The apparatus utilizes a main panel that is configured to be attachable to a rack and includes at least one sub-panel slot. At least one sub-panel is configured to be attachable to the main panel through the sub-panel slot, and the at least one sub-panel supports a predetermined connector.

Please replace the paragraph starting on p. 2, line 12 with the following substitute paragraph:

The present invention can also be viewed as providing methods for providing a method for [an] a modular system interface. In this regard, one embodiment of such a method, among others, can be broadly summarized by the following steps: (1) providing a main panel configured to be attachable to a rack and including [of] at least one sub-panel slot; and (2) providing at least one sub-panel configured to be attachable to the main panel in the sub-panel slot, wherein the at least one sub-panel supports a predetermined connector.

Please replace the paragraph starting on p. 7, line 19 with the following substitute paragraph:

Illustrated in FIG. 2 is a perspective view of an example of a main panel 31 of the modular system interface 30 of the present invention. The modular system interface 30 of the present invention comprises a number of bolt-in sub-panels that will allow almost any type of connector to be mounted in the main panel 31 for access to standard and custom fixture resources. The sub-panels will allow for resource expansion if input/output requirements change. Unused [sub-panel slots] cut-out 37 spaces can be covered utilizing a filler sub-panel. A feed-through hole 36 is also present in [this] the main panel 31 to provide for easy pass-through of cables that cannot utilize a standardized connector in the sub-panel assembly.

Please replace the paragraph starting on p. 8, line 11 with the following substitute paragraph:

Illustrated in FIG. 3 is a perspective view of an example of a dual DB9 connector sub-panel assembly 50. The dual DB9 connector sub-panel assembly 50 consists of a dual DB9 sub-panel 51 that includes a [cutout] cut-out for the two DB9 connectors 52. Illustrated is a male connector, however, it is contemplated by the inventors that any type of DB9 connector, male or female, may be used. In order to attach the DB9 connector 52 to the dual DB9 sub-panel 51, a locking or anti-rotation washer 53, hexnut 54 and jack screw 55 are utilized. The screw 55 is inserted into the dual DB9 sub-panel 51 through a support hole in the DB9 connector 52 to enable the washer 53 and hexnut 54 to be [fasten] fastened to the screw 55. The dual DB9 sub-panel assembly 50 is then connected to the main panel 31 of the modular system interface 30 of the present invention, utilizing the attaching means 59. The attaching means 59 may be a hole for a screw, snap-clip or

other type of attaching means to enable the dual DB9 sub-panel assembly 50 to be attached to the main panel 31 of the modular system interface 30

Please replace the paragraph starting on p. 10, line 7 with the following substitute paragraph:

Illustrated in FIG. 7 is a perspective view of an example of a 4 BNC sub-panel assembly 90. The example of the 4 BNC sub-panel assembly 90 includes a 4 BNC sub-assembly 90. The panel [assembly] 91 with four [cutouts] cut-outs for accepting a BNC connector 92. The BNC connector 92 is attached to the 4 BNC sub-panel 91 utilizing washers 93 and hexnuts 94. The 4 BNC sub-panel assembly 90 is connected to the main panel 31 of the modular system interface 30 and utilizes two vertically adjacent sub-panel cutouts 37 (FIG. 2) on the main panel 31 of the modular system interface 30. The 4 BNC sub-panel assembly 90 is then connected to the main panel 31 of the modular system interface 30 of the present invention, utilizing the attaching means 99. The attaching means 99 may be a hole for a screw, snap-clip or other type of attaching means to enable the 4 BNC sub-panel assembly 90 to be attached to the main panel 31 of the modular system interface 30.

ANNOTATED VERSION OF MODIFIED CLAIMS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

The following is a marked-up version of the amended claims:

1. (Amended) [An] A modular system interface [,] comprising:  
a main panel configured to be attachable to a rack and including [of at least one sub-panel slot] a plurality of cut-outs; and  
[at least one sub-panel] a plurality of sub-panels configured to be attachable to the main panel [through the sub-panel slot], wherein [the at least one] each sub-panel spans across a respective cut-out and supports a respective predetermined connector.
2. (Amended) The modular system interface of claim 1, wherein the main panel further comprises:  
[an access slot that provides easy] a feed-through hole having sufficient dimensions to allow pass-through of a cable.
3. (Amended) The modular system interface of claim 1, wherein [the] each sub-panel further comprises:  
[an] at least one connector access [slot] cut-out configured to support the respective predetermined connector.

9. (Amended) The modular system interface of claim 1, wherein [the] each sub-panel  
further comprises:

means for attaching to the main panel.

10. (Amended) The modular system interface of claim 1, wherein [the] each sub-panel  
further comprises:

a label marking area to identify the respective predetermined connector.